



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RICK PERRY
GOVERNOR

January 13, 2010

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW, #7E-247
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Texas is a national leader in education reform and student achievement. Through our college and career-ready standards and assessments, strong school accountability and a focus on educator development, we have created an education system that prepares our students for success after graduation.

Despite our accomplishments, in order to submit an application that is preferred by the U.S. Department of Education for Race to the Top (RTTT), Texas would have to commit to funding ongoing costs and to the adoption of national curriculum standards and tests.

I will not commit Texas taxpayers to unfunded federal obligations or to the adoption of unproven, cost-prohibitive national curriculum standards and tests. RTTT would amount to as little as \$75 per student in one-time funding, yet the cost to Texas taxpayers to implement national standards and assessments could be up to an estimated \$3 billion.

In the interest of preserving our state sovereignty over matters concerning education and shielding local schools from unwarranted federal intrusion into local district decision-making, Texas will not be submitting an application for RTTT funds.

The RTTT application penalizes those states that will not commit "fiscal, political and human capital resources of the state to continue, after the period of [RTTT] funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant." This provision would ultimately cost local school districts and Texas taxpayers billions of dollars.

RTTT also effectively mandates adoption of unproven and yet-to-be-completed national curriculum standards being developed through the Common Core Initiative, as well as yet-to-be-

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developed national tests. States agreeing to adopt these national curriculum standards would be hamstrung from adopting their own, more comprehensive standards.

For example, if national standards were to mandate that students must learn 10 math principles, Texas would be specifically prohibited from requiring students to learn 12 math principles. Prohibiting states from adopting more comprehensive and rigorous curriculum standards at a time when our nation's students are preparing to compete in an increasingly vast global marketplace is counterproductive. Placing such limitations on states also undercuts the very competition that results in higher standards for all.

Adopting national standards and tests would also require the purchase of new textbooks, assessments and professional development tools, costing Texas taxpayers an estimated \$3 billion, on top of the billions of dollars Texas has already invested in developing our strong standards. In a state with 4.7 million students, this amounts to more than \$635 per student, many times what Texas is eligible to receive under the U.S. Department of Education's RTTT funding guidelines.

Texas was one of the first states to adopt college- and career-ready standards and assessments. In 2006, building on past reforms, Texas passed groundbreaking legislation requiring the alignment of the state's education system – including standards, assessments, textbooks, graduation requirements and professional development. In April of 2007, I established the Commission for a College Ready Texas, which partnered education and business leaders from across the state to assist with the standards development. Texas' college- and career-ready standards were created through a collaborative effort that included the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and state and national education and business leaders, all with input from members of the public. The standards were then adopted by our elected State Board of Education. Our efforts ensured that our curriculum standards were vertically aligned, starting in kindergarten and progressing through graduation. In contrast, national curriculum standards are being adopted through a process conducted by unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups in Washington, D.C.

While several aspects of RTTT mirror Texas' education record, it is noteworthy that Texas did all of this in the interest of providing Texas students a bright future, not due to mandates from the U.S. Department of Education.

Results show that Texas' education reforms are working. As Texas has continually raised the bar for students and increased accountability for schools, both the number of campuses and the number of students meeting our higher standards continue to grow. Based on 2009 state testing, Texas' minority and economically disadvantaged students achieved higher scores than in 2008.

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The 2009 mathematics NAEP exam results confirmed that Texas' 8th grade African-American students performed the best in the nation, and the dropout rate declined for students in every demographic, while graduation and completion rates improved. Additionally, Texas' attrition rate, considered the most inclusive measure for counting dropouts, has declined for the past 10 years.

Texas is well-positioned to continue progressing under the watchful eyes of Texas citizens, and we will build upon our successful record of education reform. I firmly believe that states like Texas, working with local educators, employers and citizens, are best suited to determine the curriculum standards for their students – not the federal government. I also believe that Texas citizens, not federal employees, are best suited to set the education agenda and spending priorities that are right for Texas and our future.

Texas remains committed to improving our public schools and to building on our successful education reforms. We believe that education policies, curriculum and standards should be determined in Texas, not in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perry". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font. The "R" is large and loops around the "ick". The "Perry" is written in a similar cursive style, with the "y" having a long, sweeping tail.

Rick Perry
Governor

RP:mtp